



WUR Goes Abroad

1. Student Information

Field of study in Wageningen	MID (International Development Studies)
Study period exchange (dd/mm/yyyy)	24/01/2023 until 24/06/2023
Country (exchange)	France
City (exchange)	Montpellier
University (exchange)	Intitut Agro
Faculty (exchange)	

2. Motivation for exchange

Why did you choose to go on study exchange?

I would say my main reason was to have the opportunity of living in a French speaking environment and experiencing French culture.

What is the reason you chose for this country/university?

Institut Agro had courses in English, which was handy since I would have a hard time getting a French certificate in time. I had also heard good things about the ambience in Montpellier, and they had courses in agroecology that interested me at the time.

3. Accessibility to reach destination

Do you have any tips to reach your exchange destination? (E.g. bus, train, etc.)

Check the SNCF Connect app for browsing trains in France. If you are flying to Marseille, there are FlixBuses directly from the airport to Montpellier (the city is quite far).

4. University and studying

Could you provide some general information about the followed courses?

	Course	ECTS	Short description of the contents	Appreciation of course: 1(low) – 5(high)	Remarks
1	What is agroecology?	7	Introductory course to social and agronomical aspects of agroecology	3	Very intense but pointless coursework, all the day was allocated to some sort of task. The course felt a bit like a patchwork of too many things that did not connect too well. Some interesting concepts and research were presented, but I did not enjoy it a lot. Perhaps if you have not heard much about agroecology it may be more interesting. Every Friday had a field trip to a different farm/project, which was quite nice.
2	Environmental Data Processing and Analysis	7	First 2 weeks about statistics modelling and R, the other 2 weeks devoted to applying those techniques to a case study	4	Very intense course, the first 2 weeks are very dense, and the project actually had us working quite a bit. You can learn a lot about statistics and modelling here, very recommended (but only if you are willing to work hard). Some basic statistics and R will probably help you a lot, but you don't need too much if you are willing to work hard to follow.
3	Mobile and Web Management of Environmental Data	7	2 weeks of introductory knowledge on SQL and web design in general, followed by 2 weeks of collecting field data and developing a simple website	4	A lot of autonomous work on the first 2 weeks, I did not know anything about SQL or CSS/PHP/HTML and had a crash course into it. May be boring if you already know some, because it is covering the basics. The second block was more chaotic and less enjoyable, as a lot of new students joined us and we had too many people working together on a case study, but it was interesting nevertheless.
4	French course	1		2	I was disappointed by the French course, it was very sporadic and not very demanding. We were mostly asked to discuss topics and

					give short presentations in a quite lax environment, with little grammar studies or exercises.
5					
6					

How is the study formalized? (E.g. study forms, academic level, examination, workload, lesson material)

Each course (UE) lasts for a month. First course had an exam in the end and a seminar; it was quite formalized and had a very intense schedule with appointments all the time. My 2 following courses were demanding, but had a less tight schedule, with more self-managed work and time. They were also graded only in a final project, with no exams. First course had a lot more students to it, while the second two had less, with more individualized attention.

What is the culture of the university? (E.g. How approachable are the lecturers, engagement with local students? What are the differences with the WUR?)

Professors are more formal than in the Netherlands, but still quite approachable. Specially in my last 2 courses, there was a strong self-managed study vibe that I appreciate, with a teacher answering questions when needed but most work being done on our own, following a tutorial guide with instructions and exercises.

What does the university offer the student additionally? (E.g. Catering, sports facilities, laundry facilities?)

There are sports facilities and you can train quite a few sports (I personally did not). The university restaurant is very good and very affordable (3-6 euros per meal, depending on drinks, dessert, etc). The residence has its own (paid) laundry machines.

5.Housing-travelling-living

What are the possibilities for housing? (E.g. Availability to sign up for a room on campus, private rooms, rent rates?)

All Erasmus students got a room in one of the university residences (between 300 and 500 euros). You can also look for housing in city Facebook groups, although I wouldn't know anything about it.

What is the culture of the country like? (E.g. Differences with home, local cuisine, habits, manners?)

-

Could you give a general price indication of the place of residence compared to living in Wageningen?

Substantially cheaper, I lived in a 12 m² self-contained chamber and paid 180 euros per month for it (discounting the government rent subsidy).

Could you give some information about public transport infrastructure? (E.g. Cost public transport card, taxi prices, how to travel to the university?)

If you are at the residence, you won't have to worry about getting to university, as it is only a few blocks away. The city is quite easy to navigate overall, with a good network of trams and buses that cost 1 euro to ride for whatever distance during 1h (free on weekends and planned to become free altogether (!!)) for residents starting in 2024). Buses only run until 22h and trams until 2h; since the residence is only accessible by bus it is handy to buy a bike for your time there (although there is also an acceptable system of rental bikes for 0.5 euro per 30 minutes)

6. Free time

What are must-sees in the area? (E.g. nearby destinations, how do you prefer to travel, when to plan?)

The Calanques in Marseille are truly beautiful and deserve a weekend trip. There are numerous treks to do around that can be reached by regional bus, two notables mentions are the Ravin des Arcs and Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert. The neighbouring beach town of Sète is also quite beautiful and deserving of a day trip.

What does not appear in the travel guide, but is worth a visit?

See above and below

Do you have general tips and tricks about leisure time (E.g. recommendations for restaurants, going out?)

Emiko and Bane Lao are two good and affordable Asians restaurants. The café and museum at the MO.CO Panacée have nice exhibitions and is a good place to work altogether, and so is Médiathèque Émile Zola (or other médiathèques). Le Salon des Indépendants hosts cool jam sessions and cozy shows almost every day of the week, and beer is good and cheap. Go for Diagonal and Utopia Cinémas for your dose of alternative, artsy movies.

7.Challenges & best moment abroad

What was a challenge you have experienced?

French bureaucracy can test your patience

What was your best memory abroad?

Probably the first day I went to the beach

8. Contact details (optional)

Is the reader allowed to contact the writer?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>
---	---	-----------------------------

Name/e-mail	Álvaro – alvlapa@gmail.com
--------------------	----------------------------